

# **Speaker Models and the English Classroom:**

## **The Impact of the Intercultural-Speaker Teaching Model in Norway**

by

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## **Preface**

When I started the master's program "Fremmedspråk i skolen" at Østfold University College in the fall of 2009, I knew it would be a difficult task to combine studies with a full-time job. As I am now about to finish the program by completing the thesis at hand, there are several persons who I wish to extend gratitude to. They have all in different ways contributed with help and encouragement enabling me to reach this moment of completion.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor at Østfold University College, Associate Professor Magne Dypedahl. His help and support in the writing process have been invaluable; thank you for sharing your knowledge, showing dedication and giving inspiration to move forward with the project. Associate Professor Henrik Bøhn also deserves thanks for having taken extra time to read through drafts and give feedback.

Friends and family have shown understanding when I have had to turn down social invitations during the most intense periods in the writing process. Thank you also for innumerable questions and concern otherwise about the progress of the thesis.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all the respondents for having participated in the survey conducted in connection with the thesis.

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## **Abstract**

In the present thesis, I examine the extent to which the intercultural-speaker model is acknowledged by teachers of English in Norway. As opposed to the native-speaker model, the model of the intercultural speaker focuses on the context in which intercultural communication takes place and how interlocutors can use their own background to master the interaction between them. My point of departure is that the teaching tradition in Norway is based on the native-speaker model, and I discuss how the aim of intercultural competence, as implied in the present school reform *LK06*, challenges this established tradition.

Data has been collected quantitatively in the form of a survey questionnaire, and the analysis of 31 responses indicates that the intercultural-speaker model is only partially recognized. The age of the teachers, content versus proficiency focus in the English subject and conceptions of the English-speaking world seem to be influential factors as far as deviating attitudes is concerned.

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## 1. Introduction

The Norwegian school system has undergone many changes to meet the needs and demands of a society in transition. These changes have also manifested themselves in the prescriptions for teaching English, both in terms of structure and subject content. The previous national curriculum for upper secondary education, *Reform 94* or *R-94*, gave all students a legal right to further education and introduced them to a common English subject curriculum for vocational and general study programs. The previous national curriculum for primary and lower secondary education, *L-97*, introduced English in the first grade of primary school and prescribed methods such as ICT and project work as a means to learn the language. Now, with the latest reform, *LK-06*, we can claim that intercultural learning has become a central objective in the new English subject.

The present national curriculum reflects changes in the teaching of English on two crucial accounts which intertwine. The first refers to the fact that it mirrors the technological advancements made in communications over decades which have resulted in more mobility and an ever more globalized world. The description of subject objectives for English takes it as a matter of course that we interact with people from other countries, both abroad and in Norway. Consequently, the notion is that knowledge of different cultures and values is a necessity both in terms of effective communication with the outside world and within the multicultural society in which we live ourselves. The second account refers to the acknowledgement that increased globalization has also reaffirmed English as the definitive lingua franca internationally. Its ownership has thus been redefined to extend beyond native-speaker countries. Therefore a command of the language is viewed as necessary to succeed in a world in which English first and foremost is used for international interpersonal communication and interlocutors are more likely to be non-native speakers. As a result of this perspective change, the focus on the UK and the USA, which pervaded preceding curricula, is toned down. Instead, the new subject curriculum prescribes a content focus which extends beyond these two native-speaker regions of the English-speaking world.

Altogether, these changes reflect the potential that the English subject "[...] can promote greater interaction, understanding and respect between people with different cultural backgrounds" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2010). In the description of subject objectives this is

the overall purpose, and the means to reach such aims is to provide the students with a combination of cultural insight and communicative skills. Thus, the aim of intercultural competence has gained a central position in the curriculum.

The issue I wish to raise in this thesis, however, relates to what kind of communicative skills should be promoted according to this new focus in the English subject. As the aim of intercultural competence has gradually made an impact on FLT (Foreign Language Teaching) over the last decades, several prominent researchers and classroom practitioners are questioning whether it is feasible that students are taught communicative skills according to the traditional native-speaker model. The model implies that a variant of English within the native-speaker language region is regarded as ideal and constitutes the norm of student exposure and assessment. Instead, an alternative speaker model is proposed which is claimed to be more achievable for second and foreign-language learners and more appropriate with the function of English as lingua franca. Professor Emeritus Michael Byram at Durham University, who has developed a recognized schema for understanding the constituents of intercultural competence, refers to this as the intercultural-speaker model.

As opposed to centering language teaching on the native speaker, the model of the intercultural speaker focuses on the context in which intercultural communication takes place. When non-native interlocutors from different cultures meet, they both bring experiences and knowledge into the interaction. On the basis of these experiences and their cultural backgrounds they influence each other, and the central issue is to master this interaction. This mastery then represents a threshold level for intercultural competence which makes the individual an intercultural speaker. As every meeting is unique, however, the intercultural-speaker model has no final goal. The individual has to continuously bring new knowledge and experiences from previous encounters into the next one to expand his or her intercultural competence. Therefore, the intercultural-speaker model is abstract in nature and calls for the students to be trained in discovering universal communicative features which allow them to communicate effectively based on the distinctiveness of their *own* cultural background.

## 1.1 The Problem Statement

When I was introduced to the question of speaker models in the course "Intercultural Learning", which is an integral part of the master's program "Fremmedspråk i skolen" at Østfold University College, the topic area initially struck me as provocative. To me it has always been a matter of course that the native speaker represents the natural role model of linguistic competence. So, when it was claimed in a class blog discussion that teachers who are not very proficient in English make just as good role models for their students, I was determined to gain more insight into the implications of the two speaker models in question. This is my personal motivation for focusing on speaker models in this thesis. Ultimately I decided on conducting a survey among English teachers in Norwegian schools. The purpose was to find out more about how they actually relate to the question of speaker models. The problem statement I chose reads as follows:

To what extent does the model of the intercultural speaker square with the views of teachers of English in Norway?

At first glance the approach may seem general in nature. However, since the intercultural-speaker model is a complex one and is part of a broader understanding of intercultural competence, it is difficult to narrow it down further. I have also deemed this irrelevant because the debate of speaker models is recent and concerns the entirety of the models. Still, the use of the formulation "extent" indicates an explorative problem statement which allows nuanced findings (Jacobsen 2005, p. 62). In the present survey, I am therefore particularly interested in nuances related to three areas:

- The relationship between the English speaker model the teachers expose their students to and the model they ideally expect in student output
- The relationship between content focus and linguistic skills regarding speaker models
- Assessment criteria

Based on these three areas of investigation I believe it may be possible to, first, conclude whether it is the model of the native speaker or the intercultural speaker which has most



prominence among teachers. Second, I believe the areas of investigation may provide necessary nuanced findings to indicate extent, as expressed in the problem statement.

## **1.2 The Relevancy of Researching Speaker Models**

As referred to above, the discussion of speaker models is relatively recent and has gradually gained more prominence with the impact of intercultural competence. In Norway, *LK-06* undoubtedly emphasizes intercultural learning in the English subject curriculum. This situation justifies the present investigation for multiple reasons.

First of all, the fact that intercultural competence has been an integral part of the students' communicative competence in Norway in recent years is interesting in its own right. The introduction of *LK-06* and its significant focus on intercultural learning may indicate a break with a different teaching tradition, yet at the same time intercultural competence has been part of the curriculum for some years already. For this reason, it is relevant to explore how teachers' interpretation of the concept is influencing conceptions of speaker models.

Second, the national curriculum may be of little help when it comes to its proficiency aims. Surely, the curriculum prescribes both written and oral competence aims related to precision in language use, such as adjusting language use according to purpose, situation and genre. It does not, however, indicate a speaker model which the students' linguistic performance should be measured against. The interpretation of the oral competence aims is delegated to the local level, and school districts are responsible for the development of their own, concretized assessment criteria. This means that the competence aims are subject to different interpretations, as can be seen in relation to speaker models if one compares the oral assessment criteria for upper secondary education in Oslo and Østfold. In Oslo, to earn the highest grades for the compulsory English subject the students must master "a clear pronunciation and consistent intonation without an accent at a near-native-speaker level" (Oslo kommune utdanningsetaten, 2007). In Østfold, the requirement is "very clear pronunciation and consistent intonation" without any mentioning of the native speaker as model of reference (Østfold fylkeskommune, 2011). This may illustrate that there is no common understanding of speaker models in relation to the aim of intercultural competence, which justifies further research.

Finally, little school and classroom research has been conducted with regard to speaker models directly. In general, the focus has seemed to be centered on the teacher and whether he or she should be a native or non-native speaker in the FLT classroom. However, one relevant and extensive international survey has been conducted by Ivor Timmis (2002) at Leeds Metropolitan University. The survey, which drew almost 600 responses from both teachers and students in over 45 countries, looked at attitudes to the question of conforming to native-speaker norms. This was contrasted with the notion of being a "competent foreigner". Timmis concludes in this survey that there might be deviations as to expectations between teachers and students. While there seems to be some desire among students to conform to native speaker norms, the teachers seem to be moving away from them (Timmis 2002, p. 248). He therefore brings an interesting perspective into the discussion which constitutes another reason for conducting further research on speaker models: What are the expectations of the participants in the educational setting?

### **1.3 The Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of six main chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) The Teaching Tradition in Norway, (3) Theoretical Bases, (4) Method, (5) The Survey: Analysis and Discussion, and (6) Summary and Conclusion. Each chapter is divided into subsections.

In chapter 2, I address the teaching tradition in Norway. I outline the history of the English subject in Norway and give examples of features which I believe indicate a teaching tradition which is historically founded on the native-speaker model. In chapter 3, I provide a theoretical foundation which serves as basis for the survey. As will be evident, theory constitutes an extensive part of this thesis. The reason is that the premise of speaker models needs to be tied both to the concept of intercultural competence specifically, on the one hand, and to the more general discussion by scholars about the actual feasibility of the native-speaker model, on the other. Both aspects make up important and intertwining premises for this thesis.

In chapter 4, I go on to outline the method used for conducting the survey. It includes a justification of the problem statement, the use of a survey questionnaire and choices related to the design of questions. In chapter 5, the survey results are presented and discussed. Finally, in chapter 6 I conclude by summarizing the main findings in the present survey and suggest topics for further research.

## 2. The Teaching Tradition in Norway

Prevailing teaching traditions are not changed overnight. A tradition, as defined in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2000), refers to "a belief, custom or way of doing something that has existed for a long time among a particular group of people". The notion of intercultural competence and the inherent call by many scholars to devise pedagogy toward the intercultural-speaker model thus needs to be viewed on the basis of what seems to be prevailing teaching traditions in Norway.

My claim is that the notion of the intercultural speaker represents a break with a model which historically has leaned heavily on the native speaker. In this chapter, I will explore the native-speaker teaching tradition in terms of the history of the English subject in Norway and particularly as seen in *LK-06*'s predecessor for upper secondary education, *Reform 94*.

### 2.1. The Origins of English as School Subject

The native-speaker tradition can arguably be traced back to the very introduction of English as subject in Norway. Although the early history of English is the story of the travails to justify the teaching of the language itself and make it accessible to all social classes in society, the early beginnings grew out of the situation on the South Coast of Norway in the 1860s. Through shipping industry and trade, this region had established close ties with the UK, and English was introduced as a voluntary subject for boys after regular school hours (Ytreberg 1992, p. 9). The subject did not prepare learners for further studies, but had a practical angle to prepare them for shipping and craft. There was not much teaching of modern foreign languages otherwise. Even though Latin was dying out as a spoken language, written Latin was still regarded prestigious, being the carrier of authority and good manners. With regard to English, it can therefore be observed that the early beginnings of the subject were partly geographically secluded and that the purpose was communication with the British for trading purposes.

Despite the industrial and communicational developments in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the impact of this development on English as a school subject was hardly noticeable. This might seem strange, but as noted by Lisbet Ytreberg (1992), close encounters with foreign countries did not affect people in general, and schools were not the leading edge of

societal development (p. 10). Still, the introduction of phonetics as a science in the 1880s, along with descriptive linguistics, resulted in a gradual change in the view on language and language teaching in general. In 1882, the German phonetician Wilhelm Viëtor published the article *Der Sprachunterricht Muss Umkehren*, which was the first document advocating a focus on the spoken language and the abandonment of monotonous reiteration of grammatical structures and translations (ibid p. 11). In Norway, prominent language teachers started working toward making the nature of the English subject more in line with modern research. Consequently, it could be argued that the gradual foothold of modern language theory created a justification for the teaching of English across the country. As a result, the English subject slowly started making its way into Norwegian legislation during the very last stages of the nineteenth century (ibid. p. 11).

Triggered by factors which may also have given ground for the native-speaker teaching model, an interesting breakthrough for English as school subject can be seen in the work made by the Parliamentary School Committee between 1922 and 1927. Upon completion, the committee ruled in favor of establishing English as the primary foreign language in Norway. The reasons, as summarized in Høigård and Ruge's *Den norske skoles historie* (1971), were twofold. First, English was deemed more suitable for learners who would have to settle with elementary school. Second, the language was regarded more important than German for Norwegian trade and industry (p. 217). In this respect, the shipping fleet and the close relationship to America were explicitly mentioned; the latter argument referring to the emigration of many Norwegians to the USA. Over the next decades, the teaching of English was therefore increasingly extended. The subject was made more accessible at lower grade levels and was also developed into a more academic subject for learners going on to further education.

## **2.2 The Native-Speaker Tradition**

The historical origins of the English subject and the subsequent arguments put forth to make it the primary foreign language in Norway may thus give a clear indication of a dawning teaching tradition, founded on the country's ties with the UK and, later, America. In terms of teaching norms, Ytreberg (1992) clearly states that it was a matter of course that the subject of English was associated with the UK until World War II. Moreover, she notes that despite the

fact that many Norwegians had close bonds with the USA, contemporary political and cultural circumstances did not allow this focus to find its way into the teaching materials.

Consequently, teaching materials on the USA were reduced to isolated anecdotes which did not promote cultural awareness, but rather served to spice up the textbooks (p.14).

Ever since the USA rose to become the leading military and economic power in the world, however, Norway has undoubtedly become increasingly influenced by American culture and language through the entertainment industry. This societal development would also eventually have implications on English language teaching where a stronger focus on the USA may be observed in the teaching materials. In this respect, the English subject curriculum emphasizing American topics the most was arguably the one introduced as part of *Reform 94* for upper secondary education. The purpose statement in the introductory chapter for English as core subject stressed Norway's strong bonds with the USA and the UK, and suggested that literature and culture from the Anglo-American regions are part of our common frame of reference (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 1994). The competence aims, especially those classified as knowledge aims, clearly reflect this notion. In Module 5, entitled *The English-speaking World*, sections 5a and 5b each prescribe a set of aims with particular focus on the USA and the UK, respectively. Students should learn about history, geography, society and values associated with the two countries and their people (ibid. p. 6).

Due to this sectional composition of knowledge aims, it can therefore be argued that the *Reform 94* subject curriculum reflected a widened perspective of English. Still, the focus in the curriculum clearly suggested that this widened perspective was restricted to the two native-speaker regions, or Norway's historical bonds for that matter. A clear indication of this is reflected in the interpretation of *The English-speaking World*, as seen in Module 5. Among the ten competence aims stated, only two of them actually concern English beyond the USA and the UK. In section 5a of the curriculum "overview knowledge of the English-speaking world" is prescribed, whereas "knowledge of English as an international language" is prescribed in 5b (ibid. p. 6).

The manner in which the *Reform 94* curriculum was structured seems to have created an implicit consensus among different textbook authors on how to approach the teaching materials, as various textbooks by competing publishers were surprisingly similar in structure. For instance in Aschehoug's 1999 edition of *Targets* and Cappelen's series *American* and

*British Ways* (2000/2001), the composition typically include an introductory chapter briefly introducing the English language and the English-speaking world. The remaining teaching materials are then sectioned into two main parts consisting of chapters dealing with singled-out aspects of society in the USA and the UK. This is mirrored in both factual and literary texts. With regard to the latter, literature aims are not explicitly confined to the UK or the USA in the subject curriculum. Yet, the representation of literary texts in the textbooks shows a strong dominance of writers from the two language regions in question. The native-speaker teaching tradition in Norway therefore seems quite dominant when it comes to the subject content of English. What then about norms of language acquisition in terms of learners' linguistic competence?

Although the *Reform 94* subject curriculum does not define explicitly what type of English which constitutes good learner language, it is natural to assume that the reference norms of linguistic acquisition have hinged on the tradition for culture studies. In this regard, my own close-reading of multiple prominent textbooks indicates a strong focus on British and American English as standards of acquisition. In terms of language exposure, most publishers almost exclusively use British and American English speakers for CD recordings of textbook texts. The variety applied depends on the language region targeted in the teaching material. British-English speakers also seem to dominate texts covering the English-speaking world, which might have been seen as a natural choice to give associations to a past era of British colonization. In addition, regardless of which region is targeted, glossary lists typically consist of phonemic transcriptions according to British Received Pronunciation (RP) with American English often (but not always) indicated as a possible variation.

It is worth noticing, however, that several textbooks, such as *Passage* (Cappelen, 2003), *American/British Ways* and *Targets* dedicate several tasks to address the difference between British and American English explicitly. One might argue that the motive for such exercises is to raise awareness of language differences rather than inducing and prescribing norms of English. Still, the former textbook, *Passage* (2003), indicates otherwise; along with tasks on British and American English, it includes a factual text on the subject matter with the following statement regarding norms for learners' linguistic output: "[...]a general piece of advice is to choose one variant [of the two] and stick to it as much as possible. Your dictionary will inform you whether a word is specifically American or British" (p. 29). In other words, the textbook makes an explicit point in encouraging consistency over the notion

of adjusting language use according to the cultural background of an interlocutor. In this respect, the native-speaker model is preferred over the intercultural speaker.

In later revisions of *Passage* the statement above has been modified. In the latest edition (2009), written for *LK-06*, the text on the differences between the two language varieties is still in place, but the advice on language usage has been toned down:

“So which form of English should you choose [...], British or American English? Well, it doesn't really matter. Both forms are equally correct, although it's a good idea to choose one or the other rather than to mix them up. (Having said that, we should remember that there are other forms of English, e.g. Australian and Canadian English, which combine British and American elements.)” (pp. 74-75)

Even though this revised text suggests openness toward language diversity, it arguably shows traces of a native-speaker tradition. The fact that the text itself is still in place indicates a continued modeling on British and American English. The initial rhetorical question also seems to suggest an inherent tradition of expected correctness in this respect. When the side-note on other varieties refers to countries in which English is used as mother-tongue language, it seems that the authors either fail or do not wish to go beyond the native-speaker model.

One could argue that the example above illustrates quite well how the teaching tradition in Norway has been modeled on the native speaker, both in terms of culture studies and with regard to linguistic acquisition. The history of the English subject in Norway suggests that the country's bond with the UK constituted the driving force behind its initial establishment. Subsequent bonds with the USA and increasingly more exposure to American English throughout the twentieth century have also given this native-speaker culture a solid foothold in the subject curriculum. Textbooks have clearly put a strong emphasis on British and American culture and indicated their language norms as a model of correctness. It therefore seems indicative that the notion of the intercultural speaker is a new and unfamiliar concept to curriculum planners and textbook authors. As the national curriculum and textbooks constitute the primary sources on which practitioners base their teaching, it may thus be claimed that the intercultural-speaker model represents a break with the Norwegian teaching tradition.

### 3. Theoretical Bases

The aim of this thesis is to discuss the extent to which the intercultural-speaker model squares with the views of contemporary EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers in Norway. Before discussing this, however, it is necessary to describe both this model and the competing EFL teaching model, which is referred to as the native-speaker model. There is no doubt that both have had an impact in Norwegian classrooms in recent years. As I will attempt to show in this chapter, the models of the native speaker and the intercultural speaker within ELT (English Language Teaching) tend to be dichotomized. In his essay *Which Model of English: Native-speaker, Nativized or Lingua Franca?*, Andy Kirkpatrick (2006) even points out that the choice of model often is made on political and ideological grounds, rather than educational ones. Therefore, it is a choice also "fraught with conflicts of ideologies and interests" (p. 71).

The dichotomy manifests itself in two main schools of thought. On the one hand, there is a strand of thought arguing the principle that linguistic imperialism ensures that the spread of English is equivalent to the spread of native-speaker norms of language and Anglo-American interests. According to this view, it follows that the native-speaker model is a consequence of linguistic imperialism and therefore not a matter of a genuinely "free" choice (ibid. p. 71). On the other hand, there are scholars who hold that learners are consumers of English and are therefore empowered to make pragmatic decisions as to what model they wish to follow (ibid. p. 71). Thus, the use of the native-speaker model is a matter of free choice and not a requirement that should be externally imposed. In this respect, it may be argued that the intercultural-speaker model represents the latter strand of thought since the concept of such a norm entails adapting to a language model which is based on making pragmatic decisions according to the situation in which interlocutors communicate. This is a notion to which I will return later in this chapter.

Interestingly, it may seem that an increasing number of scholars have embraced the model of the intercultural speaker at the expense of the native speaker in recent years. The reasons may be found in globalization and the redefined role of English as the world's lingua franca, as well as new subsequent conceptions of language objectives based on SLA (Second Language Acquisition) research. In order to get a deeper understanding of the present situation, it is



relevant to look at the historical context leading up to the situation today. Based on this, it is possible to understand the current debate on which of the two models introduced above should be applied in contemporary EFL teaching.

First, I will briefly account for development stages in didactic methodology which have led to a new addition of objectives in ELT: Intercultural competence. I will then go on to describe the nature of such competence by referring to Michael Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). As this constitutes the current debate on which speaker model of English to choose in the classroom, I will finally devote the remainder of the chapter to account for this issue.

### **3.1 Development Stages in Language Didactics**

Second and foreign language teaching have been subject to several changes throughout history. While initially being the result of experiences and intuitions by eminent language teachers, major changes were increasingly influenced by advancements in linguistic research on language and language acquisition in the twentieth century (Ronowicz 2007, p. 1). More recently, findings in discourse analysis and related fields in the humanities and social sciences have contributed to further additions to the list of language objectives. Altogether, this has led to some dramatic modifications of both form and content of teaching materials (ibid. p. 1). Such changes have taken place slowly and in small steps, and current conceptions of language teaching should, arguably, be viewed as products of a train of thoughts which reflects a certain degree of continuity. Consequently, the current debate of which model to apply in ELT initially needs to be placed within a historical framework of didactic theory.

#### **3.1.1. From Formalism to Activism**

Ulrika Tornberg (1997) notes that certain trends and principles have been described as recurring by multiple writers who have given chronological descriptions of the history of language teaching. Two principles in this respect refer to the conflicting views of formalism and activism, where either the formal or functional qualities of language are targeted (p. 26).

Tornberg refers to Renzo Titone (1968), who gives an account of how these principles have been attributed varying degree of importance in language teaching throughout history.

As a predominant language-teaching approach, formalism had its days of glory from the 1700s and well into the early stages of the twentieth century; its pivot being the focus on the written structure of language, systematized through the so-called grammar-translation method. The method was founded in the Middle Ages on the teaching of classical languages, prescribing features such as mother-tongue teaching, grammatical analysis and translations. It was not designed for interpersonal communication. However, several reformists – many of whom were distinguished linguists, such as Otto Jespersen (1904) and Wilhelm Viëtor (1882) – had advocated an orientation away from grammatical reiteration and toward the spoken language (ibid. p. 29). Still, as international contact at the time was still limited, the knowledge of actual language usage was scarce, even among scholars. Therefore teachers were seldom capable of teaching a foreign language beyond its formal structures and comparing them to those of the mother tongue.

The breakthrough of reformist views in the late nineteenth century may thus be explained on two accounts. First, the introduction of phonetics created new possibilities to extend language focus. Being one of the early attempts to describe how languages were actually spoken, it equipped scholars with a basis to conduct further research on language functions. Thus it gave teachers a tool to teach the actual language and not just about the language. Second, as society was about to see vast changes, there would eventually be a need for new approaches to teaching foreign languages. Tornberg therefore describes the reformists as “visionaries in a day and age in which Europe was at the threshold of political and economic expansion” (ibid. p. 32), their major objection being the automatic application of teaching methods to modern languages founded on a language-view associated with the classical languages.

### 3.1.2 The Road to Communicative Competence

As activist language views started to gain solid ground in the beginning stages of the twentieth century, it is interesting to look at the implications of an increased focus on communication. Notions of this concept developed throughout the century and consecutive

communicative approaches contributed with additional and sometimes different ideas. They can thus be seen as a backdrop for understanding the present-day debate of speaker models.

Being one of the early reformist approaches, the direct method of the early 1900s represented a significant break with its forerunner. Contrary to the deductive nature of the grammar-translation method, this didactic approach was based on the focus on oral language and the principle of induction. Aud Marit Simensen (1998) refers to the name "direct method" as "the belief in establishing direct associations or links between L2 words and phrases and the objects, actions and states referred to" (p. 28). This entails that teaching should be conducted only in the target language and that vocabulary should be demonstrated through such methods as paraphrasing, pantomiming and using pictures, rather than translating a foreign language into the mother tongue. In combination with question-answer sequences and student activities, such as dictation and retelling of texts, the approach should promote skills in both listening and speaking. Pronunciation played a vital role in the process. As phonetics was used as a significant tool, Simensen notes that reading phonetically transcribed texts took place for a long time, especially at the elementary levels (*ibid.* p. 28). It is therefore interesting to note how a native-like pronunciation seems to have been an important measure of accuracy in the students' language from the early stages of communicative language teaching.

The direct method assumed that foreign-language acquisition processes were generally similar to those of the mother tongue. However, even though such assumptions were quite in line with modern acquisition theories (Tornberg 1997, p. 31), the method displayed weaknesses on several accounts. One weakness was the question-answer pattern. When the contents of text were dealt with, teaching was as a rule teacher-centered. As the teacher would be the one asking questions and the students would simply answer them, such sequences did not allow for proper conversation (Simensen 1998, p. 28). Another weakness concerned content selection. Even though content was prescribed to be a combination of themes and situations that were familiar to the students beforehand, the direct method was gradually criticized for lacking clear principles of selection. Adding to this, the strong focus on pronunciation would often divert the attention of textbook writers from producing connected and meaningful texts. Simensen indicates that they often reached a level of absurdity similar to the sentences students were asked to translate in a foregone age (*ibid.* p. 29). In terms of communication,

one may thus claim that the direct method was a step in the present-day direction, yet the notion was narrow compared to contemporary theories.

Consequently, the growing dissatisfaction with the direct method gave rise to the audio-lingual method, chiefly an oral approach to teaching based on the idea of language as habit-formation. One problem with this method, however, was that it did not comply with the reorientation in language teaching toward language functions and communicative competence. For example, the constant drilling of fixed structures gave little room for the students to use the target language creatively (Tornberg 1997, p. 37). As part of the conflict of methodical approaches to language teaching among scholars, the latter stages of the twentieth century saw an increased focus on the notional-functional syllabus in communicative language teaching. As more and more theorists and classroom practitioners became increasingly concerned with meaning and message, they advocated that language be taught in context, with a focus on "genuine" communication. This notion of a communicative approach to language teaching, prevailing in the 1970s and 1980s, eventually gave rise to *communicative competence* as an official concept. This idea had a strong impact on language teaching in Norway and is widely accepted as a teaching object to this day. This concept is interesting because it constitutes the basis for contemporary criticism which ultimately questions the speaker-model choice in EFL teaching.

### 3.1.3 Communicative Competence

The discussion of the competence term itself started with Noam Chomsky (1965), who opposed the habit structure of the audio-lingual method. He argued that language is rather based on abstract formal principles and complex operations which involve creative use. In defining linguistic competence, he therefore developed a distinction between *competence*, on the one hand, and *performance* on the other. Competence here refers to the intuitive knowledge the native speaker has of his or her language and the ability to understand and formulate grammatically correct sentences, whereas performance is the speaker's use of the language in concrete situations (Lundahl 2009, p. 116). In this respect, the competence of the native speaker refers to a completely homogeneous language community and is regarded as an abstraction detached from any context in which the language is used.

This abstract nature of linguistic competence, however, has since Chomsky been regarded as static and inadequate. The sociolinguist Dell Hymes (1972) claimed that there are also other factors ruled by social circumstances that determine language usage. (Tornberg 1997, p. 42). As a response to Chomsky, he therefore introduced the concept of communicative competence and incorporated the following components into linguistic competence:

- Knowing whether an utterance is feasible even if it is grammatically correct
- Knowing if the utterance is appropriate according the situation
- Knowing whether a grammatically correct and appropriate utterance is actually used (accepted usage)

According to Hymes, these three components, in addition to Chomsky's linguistic competence, make up the communicative competence a speaker uses in different situations (ibid. p. 42).

However, it is important to emphasize that Chomsky's and Hymes's discussion of competence concerned the native speaker and was not intended for foreign language teaching at all. The adoption and further development of the concept of communicative competence in EFL teaching is rather a result of the work by the Council of Europe, not least due to the contribution of J.A. van Ek (1986). Presenting what he called "A framework for comprehensive foreign language learning objectives" van Ek refers to "communicative ability" and advocates that foreign language teaching, in addition to focusing on communication skills, should be concerned with the personal and social development of the learner as an individual. This is also referred to as "social competence". Although van Ek makes no explicit reference to Hymes, his six components of competence clearly draw on Hymes's characteristic features: Linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic, socio-cultural, and social competence (Byram 1997, p. 9). Thus Tornberg (1997) notes how these components have been incorporated into the Council of Europe's detailed table of contents of the competences foreign language teaching should cover and assess, *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, which was published in 2001 (p. 44).

This outline of methodical approaches to language teaching suggests that, as with general development stages related to the notion of communication throughout the twentieth century,

the concept of communicative competence has not been static. The term itself, however, may be said to constitute the cornerstone of the communicative approach to language teaching. It maintains a linguistic syllabus but also introduces the learners to language functions and some non-linguistic elements of communication. The current debate regarding which speaker model to choose in terms of EFL teaching may therefore be said to have its roots in the conception of communicative competence. Eddie Ronowicz (2007) notes that a growing body of pragmatic and intercultural research has recently seemed to bring about yet another addition to the list of objectives in language teaching, namely the aim of intercultural competence (p. 1). This can be described as "the ability to relate to differences between the learners' native and target cultures and thus enhance the effectiveness and quality of communication" (Crozet and Liddicoat 1997, p. 3). This new objective has constituted criticism of well-established teaching traditions. With the implications of intercultural competence in mind, I will look at the controversy of introducing the intercultural-speaker model.

### **3.2 Intercultural Communicative Competence**

As such, the intercultural aspect is not absent in the present-day understanding of communicative competence. On the contrary, as Tornberg (1997) notes, two such dimensions have been embedded into the concept due to increasing internationalization: The notion that language is an expression of cultural unity and the prescription of intercultural understanding being one of the aims of language teaching (p. 43). The problem is not the fact that intercultural competence is not accounted for, but rather that some components of communicative competence may be in conflict with the implications of the former. In terms of English, such conflicts may be said to constitute tension with regard to the choice of speaker model. Not least in light of Byram's (1997) model of ICC, the traditional understanding of communicative competence can be criticized.

#### **3.2.1 Critique of Communicative Competence**

Byram makes it clear that he does not entirely reject the idea of communicative competence as an aim in foreign language teaching. However, he believes that the concept has too narrow

a focus. Consequently, "the phrase ICC deliberately maintains a link with recent traditions [...], but expands the concept of communicative competence" (1997, p. 3). As part of this expansion, he points to the experience of otherness (engagement with both familiar and unfamiliar experiences) through the medium of another language as the center of concern in foreign language teaching, and identifies two central aims: (i) "Enabling learners to use that language to interact with people [...] we call native speakers", and (ii) "in lingua franca situations [...]" (ibid. p. 3). Ultimately, he concludes that communication entails more than exchanging information and sending out messages as the exchange of information and messages depends on how what is said or written is perceived in another cultural context. Successful communication is therefore, in turn, a matter of establishing and maintaining relationships in the sense that interlocutors need to demonstrate willingness to relate and take up the perspective of the listener or reader (ibid. p. 3).

Based on the two central aims proposed above, the current discussion of speaker models is closely linked with the lingua-franca notion, and although Byram addresses foreign language teaching in general, the debate is of particular interest when it comes to EFL teaching. Today English is the official or semi-official language in more than 70 countries, one in five persons on earth has "some knowledge of English" and approximately one billion people learn the language on a world basis (Lundahl 2009, p. 71). Also taking into account the innumerable varieties the English language comprises today, these factors combined give nurture to Byram's criticism of communicative competence seen from an intercultural perspective.

In many ways the criticism manifests itself on two levels which intertwine. One aspect concerns the adoption of communicative competence to foreign language teaching, whereas the other concerns the way in which the concept has later been adapted through the work by the Council of Europe. As indicated earlier, Chomsky's (1965) view of linguistic competence targeted the native speaker and not the foreign-language learner. When Hymes (1972) then developed communicative competence on the claim that linguists also need to pay attention to sociolinguistic competence or the ability to use language appropriately to understand acquisition, he was also referring to communication between native speakers. Thus Byram claims that the way communicative competence has been transferred into the description of the aims and objectives in foreign language teaching is misleading. It suggests that foreign language learners should model themselves linguistically on first language speakers and

ignore their social identity and cultural competence in intercultural interaction (1997, p. 8). In this respect, he notes that language teaching until recently has had a tendency to focus on the sociolinguistic dimension at the expense of the sociocultural one. Although Byram gives van Ek and the Council of Europe credit for rectifying such a diversion in a new version of *The Threshold Level* (van Ek & Trim, 1991) and the subsequent framework of reference for language learning and teaching, he still criticizes the contemporary interpretation of the components of communicative competence.

Byram maintains that there is still a tendency to retain the native speaker as a model for the learner (ibid. p. 10). This has been prevalent particularly in van Ek's interpretation of the linguistic and sociocultural components of communicative competence. In his definition of linguistic competence, van Ek explicitly uses the native speaker as a reference point when describing the skill of being able to produce and interpret meaningful utterances. Byram notes how this implies that "the authority and evaluation of a learner's use of language is vested in the native speaker [...]" (ibid. p. 11). Such an interpretation of linguistic competence may then be said to have extended effects on other components. In terms of sociocultural competence, van Ek prescribes the following:

"Every language is situated in a sociocultural context and implies the use of a particular reference frame which is partly different from that of the foreign language learner; sociocultural competence presupposes a certain degree of familiarity with that context" (quoted in Byram 1997, p. 10).

As shown in this definition, there is no direct reference to the native speaker. Still, since the six components of communicative competence intertwine, the definition arguably links with the notion of linguistic competence. Thus the definition of sociocultural competence may implicitly imply a modeling on the native speaker. According to Byram, "that context" seems to refer to native speakers. He supports his argument by referring to van Ek (1986) who states that lingua franca speakers should "be aware of the sociocultural implications of the language forms they are using" (p. 63). Accordingly, the use of "*that* context" seems to suggest that there is only one set of sociocultural implications for a language which refers to native speakers, and the foreign learner is ultimately viewed as an incomplete incarnation of such speakers (Byram 1997, p. 11).



This leaves us with several questions. The definition of communicative competence is insufficient or at least incomplete. So what constitutes the competence needed by a language learner who tries to navigate in a world of cultural differences, using a lingua franca which Byram claims to be a potentially “estranging and sometimes disturbing means of coping with the world” (ibid. p. 3)? And how does such intercultural communicative competence cohere with the notion of abandoning the native-speaker model?

### 3.2.2 Defining Intercultural Communicative Competence

Intercultural competence has been defined in various ways by different researchers. For example, the Danish researchers Gertsen & Söderberg (1996) propose “the ability to communicate practically and appropriately in a given situation in relation to people with different cultural backgrounds” (quoted in Dahl 2001, p. 80). Another definition is provided by Brian Spitzberg (2000), who states that intercultural communication competence is engaging “in behavior that is appropriate and effective in a given context” (p. 375). Although the first definition is somewhat more detailed than the latter, what these definitions have in common is the focus on context. Both definitions imply that being a competent communicator means analyzing the situation or context of interaction and resort to a behavior which is appropriate in that given situation. In terms of speaker model, Byram (1997) claims that the context referred to in the definitions of communicative competence seems insufficient because the use of language as lingua franca extends beyond the context of the native speaker. Thus resorting to a behavior which assimilates to the native speaker is wrong, which I will return to in more detail later in this chapter. However, Byram provides a model for understanding the implications and acquisition processes of intercultural communicative competence. This theory is relevant because his conception of context serves as a reference for the speaker-model controversy. Although Byram’s model is a general one and focuses on the intercultural context of communication, the question of speaker model is still implicit.

As an overall concern, Byram states that descriptions of intercultural communication must take into consideration the social context in which it takes place (1997, p. 31). This social context is based on the “knowledge of the world” that interlocutors bring to the situation of interaction. On the one hand, it may refer to substantial or limited knowledge about the

foreign country or people in question. On the other hand, it may refer to the more subconscious knowledge of one's own country. This mutual perception of social identities of the interlocutors is then a determining factor for the interaction (ibid. p. 32). In this respect, Byram holds that the success of such interaction is both dependent on the effective exchange of information and the ability to establish and maintain human relationships (ibid. pp. 32-33). This requires willingness and ability, which are central aspects of one of the components of intercultural competence, namely attitude. Attitude may, for instance, refer to willingness to expect problems in communication, willingness and ability to accept criticism of one's own values and willingness to accept being perceived as a representative of a particular country with its values and its political actions (ibid. p. 33). The factors of knowledge and attitude are thus described as preconditions that transform into the actual skills of communicating in an intercultural context. In this manner, knowledge, attitudes and skills make up the components that comprise Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence. The aim is that learners should be able to reflect on their own cultural identity and develop tolerance and cultural awareness.

In Byram's model, attitudes are described as implicit in the interaction between interlocutors of different cultural backgrounds. One source of unsuccessful communication could be stereotypes and prejudice. He therefore presupposes attitudes such as curiosity, openness and readiness to suspend beliefs and judgment, both in terms of one's own values, beliefs and meanings, and those of the interlocutor. The aim is for the individual to undergo a process of "tertiary socialization" (ibid. p. 34). This decentering process entails a new orientation of subjective reality in which the individual dismantles preceding structures and reconstructs new norms based on new knowledge.

Knowledge is described in two broad categories. The first category is knowledge about social groups and their cultures in one's own country and similar knowledge of the interlocutor's. The second category is knowledge of the processes of interaction at individual and societal levels (ibid. p. 35). With regard to the first category, Byram maintains that there will always be a certain degree of such declarative knowledge present due to socialization processes. Primary socialization in the family and secondary socialization in education will inevitably lead to some formal and informal acquisition in terms of social groups associated with one's own culture and those associated with foreign cultures. This kind of knowledge can thus only

be refined (ibid. p. 35). It is therefore the second category which cannot be acquired automatically. Byram suggests a reciprocal link to the component skill of interpreting and relating, overarched by a consciousness of one's own identity, to achieve such procedural knowledge (ibid. 36).

Skill, then, is based on the preconditions of attitude and knowledge, and divides into the abilities to interpret and relate, on the one hand, and to discover and interact, on the other. The former precondition draws upon existing knowledge and need not involve interaction with an interlocutor. As such abilities may be confined to working on documents individuals are able to determine their own timescale for interpretation (ibid. p. 37). This may, in some instances, also be the case for the skill of discovery, which is described as "the ability to recognize specific phenomena of a foreign environment and to elicit their meanings and connotations, and their relationship to other phenomena" (ibid. p. 38). Byram notes, however, that such skills are difficult to operate if interlocutors have very little in common. This is particularly seen in the skill of discovery through social interaction, which involves constraints of time and the factor of mutual perceptions and attitudes. Byram thus defines interaction as the "ability to manage such constraints in particular circumstances with specific interlocutors" (ibid. p. 38). Generally, ICC calls on the individual to use existing knowledge, have attitudes which suspend sensitivity and operate the skills of discovery and interpretation. In this manner, the individual may establish relationships between his or her own social identity and those of interlocutors, manage dysfunctions and serve as a mediator between people of different cultures. Byram emphasizes these points to be the functions of the intercultural speaker which distinguish him or her from native speakers (ibid. p. 38).

As the model and the interdependence of its components suggest, however, the implication of intercultural communicative competence is not restricted to the linguistic dimension. On the contrary, a crucial part of the concept refers to cultural awareness in its own right. With regard to English, it is therefore interesting to question whether such "intercultural-speaker functions" suggested by Byram could not be maintained through the acquisition of *culture* while still upholding a native-speaker model linguistically. In other words: Are there reasons why the native-speaker model should not serve as a linguistic means of communication in lingua franca situations if awareness of culture is still maintained and acquired by the learner?

### 3.3. The Controversy of English Speaker Models

As already indicated, Byram's model is a generalized one, aiming to be "comprehensive" and "content-free" (ibid. p. 34). In this manner it does not target EFL teaching explicitly. Yet, as indicated, the spread of English and its current status as the world lingua franca suggest that the issue of speaker models may be more relevant in terms of this language as a linguistic means of communication than any other. According to David Crystal (2004), there are approximately 400 million people using English as a mother tongue, another 400 million who use it as a second language and an estimated number between 600 million and one billion speak English as a foreign language (quoted in Lundahl 2009, p. 73). It is thus an established fact that non-native speakers today communicate more with non-native speakers than they do with native speakers (Simensen 1998, p. 75). In light of this situation, I find it necessary to concretize and relate the implications of Byram's concern for the intercultural context to EFL teaching specifically. Thereby a common ground for discussing the speaker-model controversy is established. I will then discuss the controversy in question and Byram's main objections to the native-speaker model by bringing in perspectives from various scholars. At this point, I do not seek to take a stand as to which model *should* be preferred, but rather explain the backdrop of the controversy which is chosen as the starting point for the survey conducted as part of this thesis.

#### 3.3.1. From British Imperialism to World Lingua Franca

Modern English has become the most popular lingua franca across the globe. The reason for this is that the spread of English has passed through several development stages which have ultimately led to the present-day state of affairs. A bit simplified, three such stages which relate directly to the notion of global English can be identified in the work of Ronowicz (2007, pp. 11-13).

The first development stage refers to the spread of the language as a result of exploration and colonization by Britain. Between roughly 1600 and 1750 the first seeds of spread were sown

by explorers, traders and settlers, who still regarded themselves as native speakers. Over the next 150 years English then was established as a national language. The next stage can be described as the spread through education. Between 1900 and 1950 colonies started to offer education in English to indigenous peoples, which increased the number of local users. At the same time, the USA, Canada and Australia started to offer English language classes to migrants. The third stage, from approximately 1945 to the present, then sees two strands. One is that the remaining colonies of Britain gained their independence, which immediately changed the role of English into becoming "a window of the world on science and technology". This led to a growth in English language teaching all over the world (ibid. p. 12). The other strand relates to the number of activities, movements and subjects that have emerged and are carried out to a large extent in English through globalization. Examples of the latter include international agreement to adopt air traffic control, media, the entertainment industry and international aid and administration.

Generally, it can be argued that the spread of English has gone from being a consequence of British imperialism to becoming "a symbol of modernization, a key to expanded functional roles and an extra arm for success and mobility in culturally and linguistically complex and pluralistic societies" (Kachru, 1985, p. 1). Based on this pattern of spread, Braj Kachru (1985, pp. 11-30) proposes a model consisting of three concentric circles which defines how English is used and is currently being learned in the world. The first component of the model is an "inner circle" which comprises traditional native-speaker countries. Placed in the "outer circle" are all the countries, many of which used to be British colonies, where English is spoken as a second or official language. Finally, the "expanding circle" comprises all the countries that acknowledge the importance of English for international purposes and whose citizens learn it as a foreign language. With reference to these circles, Kachru (1985) makes a further distinction between speech fellowships and their relationship to each other, describing them as norm-providing, norm-developing and norm-dependent, respectively.

The "inner circle" is seen as norm-providing, but among the existing varieties of English, the British model, and more recently, the American model seem to be preferred. Norm-developing speech fellowships of the "outer circle" suggest that specific regional varieties of English have arisen or are in the process of being developed. Finally, norm-dependent

varieties are said to be used in the "expanding-circle" countries, and these norms rely on external varieties from the "inner circle", usually American or British English.

An interesting and more recent development, however, suggests that the distinction between "expanding- circle" and "inner- circle" countries is more complicated than before. Simensen (1998) notes that there is currently much more use of English in some countries belonging to the former group than the latter, in which it has held a well-defined position for a long time. This has made some scholars claim that English in Norway, as well as in several other countries, is approaching the status of a second language (p. 74). Taking on this perspective, it may be argued that the discussion of English speaker model in such countries becomes more relevant than ever. If the claim of such a transition is true, it arguably implies the acknowledgement of a nativization of the language which means the development of a "local variety". As noted by Kirkpatrick (2006), this has been the case in countries belonging to the "outer circle" (p. 76). The question thus posed relates to English language teaching and the direction of such a nativization process. Should the native speaker model still be the norm provider in the classroom, or is the notion of a pragmatic approach to be preferred, as is the case with an intercultural-speaker model?

### 3.3.2 The Controversy of the Native-Speaker Ideal

Regardless of English having the status of second or foreign language, it must be maintained that learners of English within the traditional "expanding circle" still learn English mostly for pragmatic reasons (Lundahl 2009, p. 73). As referred to earlier, the aim of foreign language teaching is twofold: (i) To be able to communicate with native speakers and (ii) to be able to communicate in lingua-franca situations. On the basis of this extended function, Byram (1997) proposes two main arguments against the native-speaker model in EFL teaching. The first problem he describes is a pragmatic educational one, namely that the result of creating an impossible target is inevitable failure. The second argument is the claim that it would create the wrong kind of competence. (p. 11). In the following, I would like to draw on these two objections and concretize their implications in terms of EFL teaching.

### 3.3.2.1 Creating an Impossible Target

The argument that the native speaker is the wrong target for learners of English also poses the question of whether the aim is achievable. This question is discussed in two strands by scholars; the first relates to the definition of the native-speaker target, and the other relates to whether it is feasible for learners to reach native-speaker language mastery.

Defining the native speaker is a central issue in second language acquisition (SLA) research (Cook, 2008, p. 171). In a world which is characterized by increasing mobility and globalization, the meaning of "native speaker", especially with regard to English, may therefore become ever more difficult to define. Several scholars have attempted to explore this question critically, such as Alan Davies (1991, 1996), Claire Kramsch (1998) and Vivian Cook (2008). The most common perspectives taken to define the native speaker seem to be those of origin, language identity and language knowledge.

From an etymological point of view, Davies (1991) defines a person as a "native speaker of the language by virtue of place or country of birth" (p. ix). This implies that the individual is born into the language and equipped with grammatical intuitions that non-native speakers do not possess. In other words, the first language a person learns to speak is his or her native language. However, this notion has been contested on multiple accounts. Kramsch (1998) objects to such an approach on the ground that it gives a nod to Chomsky's idealized and abstract language view which today is considered inadequate. In this respect, native speakership by birth is an abstraction without any sense of social reality (p. 20). The notion of being classified as a native speaker simply on the basis of the first language acquired is also problematic. In fact, the first learned language can be replaced by another language acquired later in early childhood. Examples of this can be found among migrants or among children who are adopted to another country at a very early age. When the case is that the new language is more frequently and fluently used in daily life, the first language is "no longer useful, no longer generative or creative and therefore no longer 'first'" (Davies 1991, p. 16).

A somewhat modified definition is provided by Tom McArthur (1992), who states that a native speaker is "a person who has spoken a certain language since early childhood". Still, it

arguably suggests a critical period after which the person can no longer become a native speaker of a language. As part of the Critical Period Hypothesis, Kenneth Hytlenstam (1992) even suggests that such a critical period is around 6 years of age. Which language the person is a native speaker of, is therefore virtually unchangeable according to McArthur's definition. The definition also fails to account for a social reality which extends beyond Chomsky's notion of linguistic infallibility by virtue of simply being a native speaker.

The social reality referred to by Kramsch (1998) reflects a complex picture. According to modern anthropological research, culture is described in terms of diversity, change and border crossings in which each individual is a member of multiple cultural groups (Lundahl 2009, p. 74). In this respect, Australia, Great Britain, the USA and Canada, are examples of traditional native-speaker countries in which cultural heterogeneity and multilingual usage are becoming an ever more distinct feature of society. Therefore Kramsch (1998) argues that the legitimacy of non-national, non-standard languages makes it questionable whether a person who has been born into a language can make correct grammatical judgments of correct and incorrect usage. Furthermore, she claims that displaced children in adolescence may never acquire full proficiency in their native language, and that children whose parents do not speak English with them at home may never become native speakers (p. 20).

Another approach to unveil the native speaker is therefore based on language identity, the notion being that a native speaker shows identification with a group of speakers and is a member of a certain language community. Kramsch refers to a study on perceived competence differences between native and near-native speakers of French by Rene Coppieters (1987). He concludes that native speakership is granted through the acceptance by other speakers of French and not solely on the basis of formal underlying linguistic systems (ibid. p. 22). Consequently, Thomas Paikeday (1985) notes that if some group thinks you are a native speaker then you are one within the context of that group (p. 24). The implication is thus that a person's speech shows who he or she is.

It can be argued, however, that identifying the native speaker on the basis of language identity is no less a difficult task than using origin as a starting point. I have already addressed the difficulty of ascertaining who the native speaker is with regard to multicultural and multilingual societies within the traditional "inner-circle" countries. The definitions provided



this far may therefore seem to be of little help to, for instance, minorities with an immigrant background. They may have acquired the language at an early age, but they might also still identify with their culture of origin. Where does the border line go for being perceived as a native speaker by the language community, and to what extent do people wish to be recognized as such?

Cook (2008) states that people have as much right to join the group of native speakers and to adopt a new identity as they have to change identity in any other way (p. 171). She refers to British pop and folk singers who take on American-like vowels and British politicians who try to adopt RP as best as they can to shed signs of their origins. They do this to show identification with a certain group of speakers and a language community. Thus the native-speaker group is only one of the groups a speaker belongs to, and Kramsch (1998) suggests that language identity raises questions of national loyalty. She refers to the use of English in the USA as a potential sign of allegiance and the use of any other language as a sign of disloyalty to the mainstream speech community. She therefore poses the following questions in terms of language identity: What prevents potentially bilingual outsiders from becoming integrated into a group and what is the authority of the speech community based on (p. 23)?

This leads us to a third approach in attempting to identify the native speaker, namely that on the basis of language proficiencies which distinguish him or her from a non-native speaker. Proficiency components that make up native speakers have been cataloged by various scholars in the fields of applied linguistics and SLA research. For instance, Cook (2008) refers to Stern (1983), who lists characteristics such as subconscious knowledge of language rules and creativity of language use. For that reason native speakers know the language without being able to verbalize their knowledge and they can produce new sentences that they have not heard before (p. 171). Other examples include correctness of language form, non-verbal cultural features (Davies, 1991), natural pronunciation (Medgyes, 1994), and pragmatic and strategic competence (Kasper, 1997). However, Cook (2008) also points out that several components that make up the native speaker can also be achieved by non-native speakers (ibid. p. 171). The interesting question is therefore what components non-native speakers do not seem to acquire fully?

Davies (1991) states that native speakers seldom resort to avoidance strategies. This means that they avoid giving up on comprehension or production of speech. Avoidance, however, seems to be a more common feature in speech acts involving non-native speakers (p. 155). Furthermore, Thomas Scovel (1969) argues that accent seems to be one of the greatest difficulties, if not impossible, for non-native speakers to overcome. This implies that a non-native speaker is most likely to maintain a recognizable foreign accent unless he or she learned it in early childhood (pp. 245-253). In this respect, Ingrid Piller (2002) supports the argument by noting that passing as a native speaker, in spite of exceptional level in the learned language, "is an act, [...] a performance that may be put on or sustained for a limited period only" (p. 191, 195).

The question of whether a non-native speaker can become a native speaker thus seems to be a determining factor in ascertaining the feasibility of the native-speaker model in EFL teaching. Based on what has been presented above, this may seem impossible after the critical period. Definitions based on origin suggest that to pass for a native speaker, if not born into the language, the one criterion that must be satisfied is that the language must be acquired in early childhood and maintained in use. Many proficiency features which make up the native speaker can still be acquired after the critical period, but overcoming accent and target cultural competence seem to pose substantial difficulties in which lack of the latter in combination with linguistic shortages may lead to avoidance strategies among non-native speakers. In addition, identifying an actual native speaker to serve as model seems difficult in an English-speaking world in which societies are becoming increasingly multicultural and multilingual. Furthermore, the diversity of English both in terms of regional and social varieties makes Kramsch (1998) state that "while there is such a thing as standardized [...] English usage (a linguistic concept), there can be no such thing as standardized language use (a social concept)" (p. 24). The problem of native-speaker identity has also been explored by Virginie André and Desirée Castillo (2005), researching communicative virtues that lead to successful communication in the service industry in France. With regard to gender, age, origin and occupation, they can "not find any uniquely distinguishing characteristics of the native speaker" (p. 156).

Byram's (1997) first objection to the native-speaker model, namely that it creates an impossible target, is therefore based on multiple factors which according to him contribute to

inevitable failure with EFL learners. Ultimately, the requirement of learners to have the same mastery over a language as a native speaker ignores the conditions under which they acquire English. Claiming that such a requirement may be based on a comparison with bilinguals who are incorrectly perceived to be perfect in two languages, Byram points to shared shortcomings in linguistic, sociolinguistic as well as socio-cultural competence (p. 11).

### 3.3.2.2 The Wrong Kind of Competence

If we take it for granted that the native-speaker model is unachievable for non-native learners, Byram's second objection may seem redundant at a first glance. Indeed, if non-native speakers cannot become native speakers, it would seem like a matter of course that native-speaker competence rules itself out as the right kind of competence from the very outset. However, Byram's objection here seems to refer to a continued practice in EFL teaching. As Bo Lundahl (2009) writes, "language competence [in EFL teaching] corresponding to the native speaker has been implicitly understood, if not explicitly stated" (p. 74). Therefore, despite the fact that native-speaker competence is unachievable, EFL teaching is still modeled on such a notion.

In light of this, the objection of creating the wrong kind of competence is a reflection of two major problems in the native-speaker model. The first problem is the uneven balance of power between interlocutors in social interaction. If learners strive to imitate native speakers, they find themselves in an inferior position since the native speaker "is always right" (Kramsch 1998, p. 16). This allows native speakers to exercise power over non-native interlocutors. The second problem manifests itself in what Byram (1997) refers to as "linguistic schizophrenia" (p. 11). If learners should be able to function as native speakers, they would have to separate from their own culture and acquire native socio-cultural competence and a new identity. He warns against the psychological stress of culture shock which such struggles would entail (ibid. p. 12). Kramsch (1993) therefore advocates that the learners instead have the right to use a foreign language for their own purposes (p. 256). With such a principle as a basis for communication, power is no longer vested in the native speaker and learners are restrained from adopting a new identity.

The flaws in the native-speaker model ultimately pose the question of what constitutes the right kind of competence for learners. I have previously briefly referred to Byram's notion of the intercultural speaker and how such a model serves the functions of establishing relationships between a person's own identity and those of interlocutors, managing dysfunctions and fostering speakers who serve as mediators between people of different cultures. How can this be achieved?

The notion of the intercultural speaker has been discussed by various scholars under various terms. Paikeday (1985) suggests "proficient user of the language", Cook (1999) puts forward "multi-competent speaker", while André & Castillo (2005) propose "competent foreigner". What all the terms have in common seems to be the shift in teaching focus from "what learners are" to "what learners know". In this respect, Kramsch (1998) refers to scholars who call for a strong integral link between foreign language education and cultural studies (p. 28). This is a link in which culture is taught "in conjunction with language, not as an adjunct" (Crozet & Liddicoat 1997, p. 18). Such an approach may not be new to contemporary teachers of English, but a vital element in the intercultural style seems to be the call to abandon the isolated focus on native-speaker cultures. Instead the center of attention should be placed on interaction between interlocutors in a given context so that learners ultimately acquire the ability to decenter and take up the other's perspective on their own culture, whereby they can anticipate and resolve dysfunctions (Byram 1997, p. 42). In order to achieve such aims, content materials need to be devised in such a way that they reflect the notion that "speakers [...] over their lifetime acquire a whole range of rules of interpretation that they use knowingly and judiciously according to the various social contexts [...]" (Kramsch 1998, p. 27). In this manner, language teaching develops a third culture, or a "third place", which is found in the intersection between the various cultures that join together in the classroom (Kramsch 1993, p. 257).

At present, however, it may seem that research has yet to provide a complete framework of the implications that an intercultural-speaker model constitutes. If we adhere to the idea that culture and language are constituents which make up EFL teaching, the linguistic dimension may pose a particular challenge in this respect. Although attempts have been made to create simplified and "neutral" forms of English, such as Globish, there seems to be no universal

consensus on a standardized form of International English. This poses the question of what language norms the notion of mutual intelligibility should be founded on.

Some researchers predict that regional varieties of English will develop within the "expanding circle". For example, it is claimed that a European accent, or Euro-English, is in the process of being developed (Simensen 1998, p. 77). This is a variety which looks to continental Europe, instead of Britain and the USA. Such a development might be a step in the direction of an intercultural-speaker norm on which European learners can model themselves. Cook (2008) advocates that for learners to become efficient L2 users, and not imitations of native speakers, textbooks need to include examples of successful L2 use, which seems to be almost totally absent in today's editions (p. 173). He calls for a focus which goes beyond the concept of L2 users being tourists or visitors who ignorantly ask for directions or students who chat to each other about their lives and interests, in perfect English. In this manner examples of good L2 users would make good role models for learners (ibid. p. 173).

Meanwhile, there are scholars who hold that the native-speaker model could still be used in the linguistic sense in EFL teaching. Davies (1996) acknowledges that the native-speaker concept contains such great variation that it can be dismissed as a myth, but he also claims that a language learner still needs the native-speaker ideal as a target or inspiration (p. 157). In this point of intersection, and in light of the widened understanding of communicative competence and the implementation of *LK06*, my aim is to explore the extent to which the intercultural-speaker model squares with the views of practitioners in English classrooms. This is based on the claim that the native-speaker norm has been deeply rooted in the Norwegian teaching tradition. In the following chapter I will therefore focus on the methodical approach to answer this problem statement.

## 4. Methodical Approach

Method is a broad term referring to how a researcher can gather, treat and analyze data. Different methods are applicable for this purpose, and the choice depends on what the researcher wants to find out. The reason for this is that the choice of method also determines what is actually *possible* to find out and therefore often functions as a directive when conducting field research. In this chapter, I would therefore like to give an account of the method applied in the present study conducted on teachers of English in Norway. I will briefly discuss the premise of the study and the problem statement. Then I will justify the choice of survey as method for collecting relevant data. Finally, I will explain how the selection of questions relates to the problem statement.

### 4.1 About the Choice of Method

The field research conducted in connection with this thesis aims at indicating whether the model of the native speaker or the intercultural speaker of English is prevalent among English teachers in Norway after the introduction of *LK-06*. By collecting data from respondents who are contemporary practitioners in the field, it may be possible to confirm or disprove the notion of a continued modeling on the native speaker. As discussed in a previous chapter, the study may in this respect help to establish whether current teaching practices reflect the teaching tradition in Norway. In this manner trends in the study data may give valuable information in the discussion of whether the notion of the intercultural speaker squares with the views of English teachers.

When conducting field research the problem statement is crucial. As noted by Jacobsen (2005), it functions as a directive for what kind of field research needs to be conducted and the method the researcher should apply when gathering empirical data (p. 72). In this regard, he makes a distinction between descriptive and explanatory problem statements. The former type of problem statements explores *what* the state of a phenomenon is and tries to give a description of extent and scope. The latter is more concerned with causes and explores such causal relations between variables by asking *why* (ibid. p. 75). Therefore, in the present study

the focus is more in line with the former notion, as data has been gathered on the basis of the following problem-statement proposal: *To what extent does the model of the intercultural speaker square with the views of teachers of English in Norway?* As the proposal indicates, it does not aim to explain causal connections, but rather establish what the situation is, based on extent and scope.

After having established what the problem statement is, the question of which research design to apply arises. According to Jacobsen (2005), the choice of research design springs from the nature of the problem statement, and he makes a distinction between intensive and extensive field studies. Intensive studies refer to a design in which the researcher has many questions, or variables, and few respondents, or units (p. 94). This allows him or her to go into depth and collect data with many nuances and details on the phenomenon. Doing extensive studies, on the other hand, entails quite the opposite; the researcher has relatively few variables, but many units. The purpose of such a research design is to make precise descriptions of the extent, scope and frequency of a phenomenon (ibid. p. 94). Although extensive studies may not give the same degree of in-depth data, due to few variables, the high number of units may increase the opportunity of generalizing findings from a selection of the population (ibid. p. 94). Extensive studies are therefore especially suited for uncovering similarities and differences between different units and mapping out connections between different variables (ibid. p. 95).

For the purpose of the field study in this thesis, it is thus justifiable to choose an extensive research design. The problem statement involves an attempt to describe the extent of acceptance of the intercultural-speaker model in relation to teaching traditions, and such descriptions need to be generalized. It has therefore been more relevant to collect data on the basis of few variables and many units than the other way around. A survey fulfills such criteria and the required nature of data collected seems suitable for answering the problem statement. In this respect, McKay (2006) notes that essential outcomes of surveys are factual, attitudinal and behavioral information about the respondents (p. 35). I will therefore concretize these constituents later in this chapter when giving a more detailed introduction to the present survey.

The choice of conducting a survey within the scope of an extensive research design indicates a quantitative rather than a qualitative method. Jacobsen identifies both advantages and short-

comings in this regard. Among advantages he emphasizes the fact that having many respondents gives a representative selection which increases the chances of making generalized descriptions. The information gathered is structured, standardized and can easily be processed through a computer. In addition, a survey helps to maintain a critical distance between the researcher and respondents. There are no personal ties, and the respondent is merely a faceless unit. Consequently, the focus on the general and often impersonal circumstances is strengthened (ibid. pp. 132-133).

One danger, on the other hand, when using the quantitative method, is receiving superficial data. Since this approach targets many units, the survey cannot be too complex. Therefore it is also impossible to unveil all the individual variations within a group of people. This is closely connected to another problem, namely the fact that the researcher pre-defines questions and alternative answers, something which might exclude other relevant information. The researcher's conception of relevancy may deviate from that of the respondents', and a survey does not give room for information about circumstances beyond the actual questions. Thus the quantitative method can be described as less flexible than the qualitative.

Finally, maintaining a critical distance may also have its shortcomings. The fact that the researcher and respondents do not meet may cause a lack of understanding of the phenomenon that is researched. Since they do not know each other, it may be difficult for the respondent to know what the researcher means by his or her questions and alternative answers (ibid. pp. 133-134). Closely related to this problem is the danger of respondents interpreting what the "right" answer should be from the perspective of the researcher, which may cause them to give unrealistic responses (McKay 2006, p. 36). Consequently, it is essential that the complexity of questions and alternative answers is kept at a minimal level.

#### **4.2. The Survey Design**

In the present survey, I have tried to take the factors referred to above into account. The survey was conducted in the form of a questionnaire with the aim of making it both simple and time-efficient for the participants in question. It was submitted electronically to approximately sixty English teachers at different school levels in late April and early May of



2011, and the respondents were encouraged to conduct the survey at their convenience. Thus there was no definite deadline set, and the electronic questionnaire remained open to respondents until the end of the school year in late June.

Participants were selected on the basis of school levels. Therefore, an even number of questionnaires was submitted to English teachers at different primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools. In this manner, I was aiming to also receive an evenly dispersed number of responses and thereby be able to provide reliable analyzes of possible deviating views across school levels. No other considerations were taken into account regarding the actual selection of respondents.

In an attempt to avoid receiving superficial data, the electronic questionnaire was designed in such a way that it was impossible to skip questions. Consequently, if a question was left unanswered, the respondent was unable to proceed with the survey. In this manner I avoided receiving unfinished questionnaires and incomplete data sets. A challenge in this respect, however, is the danger of receiving unreliable data. Since the respondents are "forced" to answer all questions and all of them are close-ended, misconceptions might lead to random answers. For this reason, several of the questions were designed according to a checklist format, which allows the respondents to check several alternatives that they feel apply to their situation. In addition, wherever possible I allowed an open-ended slot in which they could clarify or add comments to their answers. This enables me as a researcher to better understand their comprehension of the question and interpret the implication of their answers accordingly.

The survey consists of ten questions in all. Three questions are related to background information about the respondents, four may be said to refer to views on English language-teaching practices, and three questions target opinions on language norms on a more general basis. However, since most of the questions ask the *opinion* of the respondents, it may be difficult to make a clear categorization as attempted above because the formulation of the questions may indicate that attitudes and practices intertwine. I would therefore like to give an initial outline of and justification for the individual questions in the present survey and indicate how they relate to each other.

### 4.3 Choice of Questions

As referred to earlier, important items in surveys are questions which include information about facts, attitudes and behavior of respondents (cf. McKay (2006)). Thus, in this questionnaire I have included all three categories. The reason is that such a combination may help to confirm or disconfirm consistency in the respondents' answers. Questions related to facts about the respondents may reveal that certain individuals share the same views and practices based on common parameters. They may also unveil deviations. Similarly, the combination of attitudinal and behavioral questions may serve as a useful measure to identify consistency in the views respondents express and the practices they indicate they (would) apply in their teaching. Altogether, the intention is to disclose possible nuances in the data set, which in turn can be helpful in establishing reliable trends and giving generalized descriptions.

Questions 1-3 in the survey aim at collecting background information on the respondents. For the sake of being able to observe consistency and possible deviations according to the problem statement, I deemed it relevant to enquire about the school level, what age group they belong to and their educational background with regard to English. Questions 4 and 5 enquire about general attitudes toward speaker models and may be seen as intertwined. Question 4 focuses on the respondents' own points of reference for using English when teaching, whereas question 5 is intended to say something about what model of English teachers believe their students should aspire to in the acquisition of English. In this manner, I might be able to identify model consistency or deviation when it comes to language exposure and expectancies in terms of student language output.

I have previously referred to scholars who advocate a close link between culture and language in EFL teaching, such as Kramsch (1998) and Crozet & Liddicoat (1997). Accordingly, the purpose of questions 6 through 8 is to explore consistent or possible deviating views in terms of the intercultural-speaker model when it comes to the components of language and culture in the English subject. Question 6 enquires about varieties of English which the respondents deem relevant to focus on in teaching. Question 7 has an equivalent formulation but with language varieties being substituted with culture focus. In both questions the respondents

could check "inner-circle", "outer-circle" and "expanding-circle" language varieties and cultures. The reason for including "expanding-circle" countries is Cook's (2008) call to focus on successful use of English among L2 speakers, which is suggested as a possible approach to the intercultural-speaker model (cf. chapter 3). Question 8 then serves to confirm or disconfirm interpretations of answers in questions 6 and 7. By asking respondents how they believe students would best become good communicators in English internationally, I am interested in finding out what combination of language model and culture focus in teaching they see as most suitable. The alternatives are acquisition of native-speaker culture knowledge and native-speaker language skills, intercultural knowledge and language skills based on making oneself understood with a Norwegian accent and pronunciation pattern or intercultural knowledge combined with language skills acquired according to native speakers as norm providers.

Finally, questions 9 and 10 concern linguistic correction practices and assessment. In question 9, the respondents are asked to check language features which they would generally correct in their learners' oral language production. Since one of the prominent criticisms of the native-speaker model refers to the implication of learners having to be linguistically schizophrenic and being unable to use English in their own right (cf. Byram, 1997), I therefore listed several linguistic features which allow a "Norwegian" sense of identity. They include a Norwegian intonation pattern, Norwegian pronunciation of alien sounds in English, direct transfer of Norwegian idiomatic phrases into English, Norwegian word order, concord errors and inconsistent use of vocabulary according to different English language varieties. Since the respondents could check as many features they regarded relevant to the question, the aim was twofold. First, it was to find out if the features listed generated a high score in general and, second, to find out which specific features that are considered most grave. Thus the nature of the score might give an indication of consistency related to previous questions and the extent to which the respondents lean toward a native-speaker or intercultural-speaker model. In this respect, question 10 may be seen as conclusive. Designed as a Likert-scale question, the respondents are asked to what extent they agree that native-speaker pronunciation and/or intonation influence grading in the oral part of the English subject.

Generally, the questions in the survey fall into three different categories which are relevant for answering the problem statement. The first relates to the general preconception of ideal

English. This may be seen in terms of the respondents' reference points of ideal use of English for teaching in relation to the model they wish their learners to pursue. The second refers to views on teaching focus with regard to the components of culture and language. This category may reveal model consistency or deviation in relation to the call for teaching culture in conjunction with language, both components with an intercultural focus. Finally, the last category manifests itself in the views on correction and assessment practices. Information on correction habits may indicate a nod to the model of the intercultural speaker or the native speaker. In addition, it may be possible to observe whether a seeming nod to either model is reflected in the final assessment criterion. When analyzing and discussing the survey results, these factors will thus serve as the main parameters to indicate the extent to which the notion of intercultural speaker squares with the views of the respondents.

## 5. The Survey – Analysis and Discussion

As mentioned in chapter 4, the electronic questionnaire was submitted to approximately sixty English teachers across different school levels in late April and early May of 2011, and there was no definite deadline set for the respondents to conduct the survey. By the end of the school year in late June, it had generated thirty-one responses. This number was somewhat below expectation, but some principals and deputy heads at different schools had indicated in advance that a tight schedule for many teachers toward the end of the school year might result in less feedback than anticipated. Although I had expected the number of participants to be somewhat lower than the number of questionnaires actually submitted, I had to acknowledge that my discussion of the results would have to be based on roughly fifty per cent of the total number of questionnaires. With regard to this, I will return to the factor of reliability when discussing the findings in the survey.

In this chapter, I wish to draw attention to the survey results. The survey was conducted according to the following problem statement: *To what extent does the model of intercultural speaker square with the views of English teachers in Norway?* To answer this question, I have proposed three main indicative factors as reflected in the survey design: Model of language exposure and model of student output, teaching focus in terms of language and culture, and correction and assessment views. First, I will present and analyze the results of the individual questions. This analysis will then serve as the basis for discussing the factors referred to above.

### 5.1 Survey Responses and Analysis

The first three questions serve to provide factual information about the respondents, whereas questions 1 through 3 enquire about school level of occupation, age group and educational background, respectively. In terms of school level, the majority of respondents, 45.2 % (14 units), indicate everyday teaching practice in upper secondary school. Additionally, 37.7 % (12) of the respondents state that they work at the lower secondary school level, and 16.1 %

(5) in primary school. This indicates that a majority of the respondents in the survey teach at the secondary school level. In terms of age, all occupational age groups indicated in the questionnaire, ranging from 20 to 70 years of age, are represented, though with a majority range of 30 to 59 years of age; 32.3 % (10) were in the age group 50-59, 29 % (9) between 30-39 years of age and 25.8 % (8) between 40 and 49 years of age. Their educational background thus seems to reflect the fact that most respondents are experienced practitioners in upper secondary schools. A majority of 38 % (12) of the respondents have taken extension courses in English at the Bachelor's level, while 16.1 % (5) indicate competence level equivalent to a Master's degree or "hovedfag". Furthermore, an even percentage of 19.4 % (6) have taken the full foundation course or one semester of English. 6.5 % (2) stated that they have no formal competence in the subject.

In question 4, the respondents are asked the following: *What is your point of reference for ideal English when developing your students' oral skills?* As mentioned previously, I was curious about their own relationship to speaker model in order to measure it against the model they encourage their students to attain (cf. question 5). The result of the survey question shows strong polarizations in this respect. 48.4 % (15) respond that they hold British English as their notion of ideal English, and the same percentage indicates no ideal variety so long as pronunciation is clear and comprehensible. Only one respondent indicates American English as the ideal reference point, but it is commented that he or she has a personal American English background. No respondents indicate other native-speaker varieties.

With such a split result between British English and no preferred ideal, I find it relevant to examine the figures further to try to establish a more detailed profile of the results. Thus, in regard to school level and educational background there seems to be no noticeable pattern in the respondents' answers. When it comes to age groups, however, a slight trend may be observed. Although the number of responses indicating British English or no preferred ideal is fairly equally dispersed between the ages 30-59, there seems to be a general tendency toward the preference of British English proportional with older age. In the age group 50-59, 60 % (6) favor this variety and all of the respondents between the ages 60-70 (3) have checked the same alternative.

The polarized tendency in question 4 seems to be consistent with the answers in question 5. The respondents are asked the following question: *What do you think the students should pursue when practicing oral skills in the English school subject?* Of the two alternatives provided, 51.6 % (16) respond that students should aim at communicating independently of the native-speaker as their point of reference, while 48.4 % (15) state that they should make a conscious choice in terms of a native-speaker variety they wish to model and try to apply consistent use of this standard. Furthermore, the distribution of responses seems to show a clearer tendency in terms of the respondents' background profiles. According to age groups, the trend is similar to that indicated in question 4. However, in the age groups 30-39 and 40-49, there is a stronger tendency to prefer native-speaker independency, namely 68.75 % (11) compared to 31.25 % who say they prefer making a conscious choice of a native-speaker variety. In the age group 50-59, the percentages are quite evenly distributed while all of the respondents in the age group 60-70 indicate a preference for a native-speaker variety. This may then be seen as another indication of preference for the native-speaker model proportional with older age. Interestingly, however, there is also a clear distribution pattern in terms of school levels. All of the respondents from lower secondary schools, regardless of age group, indicate a preference for native-speaker independency. In contrast, respondents from the upper secondary school level seem to prefer a native-speaker variety, namely 84.6 % (11) compared to 15.4 % (2). Since the number of participants from these two school levels was quite even, a clear deviation between the two groups may thus be observed with respect to the expectation of which speaker model students should strive to attain.

I have previously referred to the main components of foreign language teaching being those of language and culture, as stated by Byram (1997). In this respect, the concept of the intercultural speaker should be regarded as a language constituent which coincides with an intercultural content focus. Together, these constituents make up intertwining dimensions in Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence. I therefore think it essential to explore the respondents' views on the intercultural speaker model within the context of culture focus. Questions 6, 7 and 8 are therefore related to views of relevant focus with respect to language varieties and culture as well as the balance between them in terms of native and intercultural focus. Of particular interest is one of the alternatives provided in questions 6 and 7 because it indicates focus on language varieties and cultures from the

“expanding circle”, which is to say varieties of English and cultures where the role of English is that of foreign language.

Questions 6 and 7 are designed according to the checklist format, which means that all the respondents can check *multiple* alternatives. This makes it possible for me as researcher to measure the degree to which they acknowledge an extension of teaching focus beyond the native speaker by simply observing the total number of checks for the alternatives provided. Both questions are closely related to each other and have the same alternatives, something which allows them to be treated together. The following question is posed in number 6: *Which language varieties, in your opinion, are relevant to focus on in the teaching of English?* Similarly, question 7 reads: *What, in your opinion, are relevant areas of focus in terms of culture studies in English class?* Not surprisingly, there is an overwhelming consensus that native-speaker language varieties and cultures are relevant areas of focus. The percentage for native-speaker varieties is 96.3 % (30) and 100 % (31) for native-speaker cultures. Then the frequency of checks drops considerably, however, both in terms of language variety and culture focus. With regard to the “outer circle”, only 35.5 % (11) indicate relevancy of English varieties spoken in countries where it has the status as an official language, and 48 % (15) believe that it is relevant to focus on cultures in which English is a second language. When confronted with the focus on language varieties of English as a foreign language and cultures within the “expanding circle”, the numbers drop even further. Less than 10 % indicate that either aspect constituted a relevant teaching focus.

The similar pattern of responses in each of the two questions thus indicates a strong and consistent consensus among the respondents, who seem to lean quite firmly on the native-speaker model in terms of both language and culture focus. To concretize the implications of their answers in 6 and 7, question 8 therefore presents them with three alternatives of suggested combinations of language and culture focus: Native speaker/native speaker, non-native speaker/non-native speaker, native speaker/non-native speaker. The question reads: *How can students, in your opinion, best become good communicators in English internationally?* Here 64.5 % (20) indicate that such competence can be best achieved by having acquired knowledge of different cultures, but with language skills attained according to a native-speaker variety as model. 25.8 % (8) believe only in knowledge and skills according to the native speaker, whereas merely 9.7 % (3) indicate the alternative which was



designed according to the intercultural-speaker model, namely the acquisition of knowledge of different cultures and the ability of intelligible communication based on a Norwegian accent and pronunciation profile.

The responses for question 8, complemented by those for question 6 and 7, seem to indicate a firm tendency. While many respondents acknowledge that the focus on cultures could be extended beyond those of native speakers, most of them maintain that linguistic competence should be acquired according to a native-speaker model. The low score for the "expanding circle" also suggests that any focus beyond the "outer circle" is considered irrelevant on both accounts. Furthermore, it may be said that the answers for question 8 provide a further interpretation of the distribution of answers in questions 6 and 7 regarding the percentages for "inner-circle" and "outer-circle" cultures and language varieties. Since almost 50 % of the respondents indicate relevancy of the "outer circle" in terms of culture focus, it could be argued that this figure, combined with the tendency in question 8, indicates *degree* of focus. This means that the main focus in teaching should be reserved for native-speaker cultures, but incidental encounters of cultures beyond the "inner circle" may be relevant to reflect the spread of English. A similar interpretation could be applied with regard to language varieties, but here the score is even lower for varieties within the "outer circle".

The tendency of favoring the native-speaker model at the expense of the intercultural-speaker model in teaching seems to be supported by the responses in question 9. The respondents are asked to check various language features they would generally correct in their students' oral language production in English. Many of the language features listed imply that a sense of Norwegian identity is maintained. The responses reveal that those features generally receive a high score, which means that they are in need of correction. Norwegian word order seems to be perceived as the gravest error in this respect, as 87.1 % (27) of the respondents have checked this feature. Direct transfer of Norwegian idioms into English also seems to be interpreted as another potential source of communicational breakdown, as this feature is checked by 77.4 % (24) of the respondents. Furthermore, concord errors and Norwegian pronunciation of phonemes which do not exist in the Norwegian language both receive a score of 74.2 % (23). The score for Norwegian intonation pattern is 67 % (21).

Interestingly, one feature which does not imply a particular trace of Norwegian speech identity is not regarded as a source for correction. Only 22.6 % (7) of the respondents state that they would correct inconsistent use of vocabulary from different English standards. This seems to be an indication that most of the respondents are open to mixed use of different English language varieties and that consistency is of less importance. Nevertheless, based on the responses in previous questions it may be argued that this openness is mainly restricted to native-speaker variants. However, as commented upon by several respondents, the degree to which they would correct any of the language features listed depends both on the competence level of the individual students and the teaching situation. Therefore it may be incorrect to draw conclusions on the basis of the figures in this particular question.

A possible interpretation, however, is that requirements of attaining language competence relative to a native speaker become more pronounced proportional with the competence level of the students. At least it seems that tendencies in the survey thus far indicate a nod to the native-speaker model as the guideline for acquiring English language skills. This notion also seems to be reflected in the responses given to the final question of the survey. Regarding assessment, question 10 had the following formulation: *To which extent do you agree that British, American or other "native-speaker" pronunciation and/or intonation influences grading in the oral part of the English subject?* The question was arranged according to the Likert-scale, and responses show the following distribution: "totally agree" 35.5 % (11), "partly agree" 48 % (15), "partly disagree" 12.9 % (4) and "totally disagree" 3.2 % (1). There seem to be no identifiable trends according to school level, age or educational background.

As the figures reveal, 83.5 % (26) of the respondents are of the opinion that native-speaker language features influence grading, at least to a certain degree. The fact that a majority have checked "partly agree" may therefore be interpreted as a reservation based on the students' competence level. However, the result seems to reflect that student language production is generally measured against native-speaker competence. In this manner, it may be claimed that the answers in question 10, combined with the general tendency of the survey results, indicate that the native speaker represents the general model of both language exposure and expected student language production.

## 5.2 Discussion

In this survey, the results seem to reflect a continual predominance of the native-speaker model. Based on the teaching traditions in Norway, this may not be an unexpected outcome as such. However, I would also argue that the results indicate certain nuances, or even inconsistencies. Since the problem statement of the thesis is concerned with the examination of the *extent* to which views among Norwegian English teachers square with the intercultural-speaker model, those nuances therefore need further discussion. For this reason I have classified the findings around three factors which will be discussed in the following:

- Language exposure and student output
- Language and culture focus
- Language corrections and assessment

The results also need to be discussed in terms of reliability, however, as inconsistencies may have been caused by a lack of theoretical understanding of the intercultural-speaker model among the respondents and possible shortcomings in the survey construct itself. One challenge for me as a researcher was to design questions that were easy to comprehend, but yet did not require a deep theoretical understanding of the concept. Such theoretical bases would have been difficult to convey within the limitations of a short survey. The fact that there is, as of yet, no other *standardized* model to relate to than the native-speaker model may thus constitute a source of confusion as to what the intercultural-speaker model implies. As noted by Kirsten Jæger (2001), the intercultural speaker is a dynamic concept which, in principle, has no final goal and its notion of life-long learning implies that foreign-language learners can never in their life time consider themselves fully qualified intercultural speakers (p. 53). This abstract nature of the intercultural-speaker model thus reflects the difficulty of making survey questions which accurately capture the scope of its implications and provide respondents with necessary theoretical bases. The probability of respondent misconceptions therefore needs to be taken into consideration in the discussion of results.

Another factor which needs to be addressed as far as reliability is concerned is the amount of data collected. As I have already indicated, the participation of the survey was about fifty per cent of the total number of questionnaires distributed. Thirty-one respondents thus constitute a fairly limited sample something which calls into question the generalizability of the findings.

Furthermore, the problem of generalizability is also seen in the imbalanced distribution of respondents. For example, while the number of respondents from lower and upper secondary schools was approximately the same, there were only five respondents from primary school. Similarly, in terms of age, there were only three respondents in the age group sixty to seventy. Making reliable comparisons between the respondents is therefore difficult in this particular survey. Consequently, conclusions in this thesis need to be drawn on the basis of general tendencies. To achieve this, I believe it is more sensible to treat the respondents mainly as one single group and rather point to nuances in the results by comparing and relating the answers from the different questions in the survey.

### 5.2.1 Language Exposure and Student Output

As indicated in the analysis of results, the questions related to this aspect show polarized views. About 50 % either hold British English as their own ideal reference point or they have no preferred ideal when teaching oral skills. Similarly, about the same number of respondents believes that the students should either strive for consistent use of a native-speaker variety or communicate independently of the native speaker as a point of reference. In this respect, the results seem to reflect a consistent split among the respondents at first glance.

However, this seemingly consistent split needs to be discussed further, because the results also reveal that there is necessarily no natural correlation between the model the same respondents hold as ideal for teaching oral English, on the one hand, and which model they believe their students should strive to attain, on the other. While the majority (54.80 %) indeed indicates a model for the students which coincides with their own notion of ideal English, there are also many respondents who have expectations of the students that are inconsistent with their own reference points. Most interesting in this respect is the percentage of respondents who indicate no preferred ideal of model to teach, but maintain that the students should try to make a conscious choice of a native-speaker variety on which they should try to model their English. This view was held by 25.80 %. This shows that there is no matter of course that a non-preference of model to teach means that the respondents do not expect a consistent choice of standard in their students' output.

A question which needs attention is therefore how those respondents conceived the alternative answer "no preferred ideal" when asked about own reference points for teaching English (cf. question 4). Even though this alternative intends to imply models of English which extend beyond the native speaker, there is reason to believe that the respondents are still thinking within the native-speaker realm. Several respondents add comments which enforce this assumption. For example, some write that they would teach both British and American English or a mixture of the two varieties. One respondent even writes that he or she switches between British, American and Irish English. Others also explicitly comment that even though they have no preferred ideal, they reward a native-like pronunciation in their students with regard to assessment. In comparison, none of the respondents address non-native varieties. As the comments suggest, it may therefore seem that the native-speaker model is more pronounced among those respondents who indicate "no preferred ideal" than the initial figures suggest. Even though their answers imply that they may have no preference as to which specific variety to teach, the comments suggest that the varieties of English deemed as relevant for exposure are found within the "inner circle".

One criticism may probably be raised against the formulation of the alternative itself, which may seem vague. Since the intention was to unveil potential reference points to ideal English beyond the native-speaker model, it should arguably have had a more specific formulation. However, as the comments reveal, it seems probable that the outcome does not deviate substantially from the present results for this group of respondents. In addition, it should not be disregarded that a considerable number of respondents, 48.35 %, do seem to have understood the alternative correctly. The figures show that 19.35 % indicate British English as the ideal reference point for teaching English but students should strive to communicate independently of the native speaker. 29 % also indicate no preferred variety of teaching and show consistency in encouraging their students to adhere to native-speaker independency.

Altogether, this arguably leans toward the tendency of the native-speaker model being the favored model used for teaching. The figures reveal that 70.95 % (22) lean on one or several native-speaker varieties which serve as basis for student exposure. Mixed views then seem to be the case when it comes to expectancies of model for students to pursue in return. Approximately 50 % of the respondents seem to prefer the native-speaker model or native-speaker independency, respectively.

### 5.2.2 Language and Culture Focus

In addition to providing information about which model the respondents seem to adhere to in terms of language and culture focus, the questions related to these aspects also give an indication of the *extent* to which they all adhere to a model. This can be seen on the basis of the frequency of checks for “inner-circle”, “outer-circle” and “expanded-circle” cultures and language varieties (cf. questions 6-8). In this respect, these results may also be viewed in light of the discussion on model of language exposure. As pointed out in the analysis of the survey results, the answers in question 8 reveal that a majority of 64.5 % of the respondents believe that the best way for students to become competent communicators internationally is having attained English language skills according to the native-speaker model and having acquired knowledge of different cultures. This figure, although slightly lower, thus seems fairly consistent with the estimate of 70 % who indicate preference for one or several native-speaker varieties for language exposure in question 4. The results for question 6 also seem to strengthen this notion in that native-speaker varieties are deemed relevant variants of focus by 96.8 % of the respondents. In contrast, only 35.5 % agree that also variants of English found in the “outer circle” should be subject to attention and possibly only to a limited extent. Some of those respondents who indicate relevancy of “outer-circle” variants give comments to this effect. Two respondents indicate that other varieties may be used as examples to enhance understanding of English, but not necessarily serve as models for acquisition. One respondent who only indicates native-speaker varieties also comments that he or she puts emphasis on the formulation of the survey question, which is “focus on”. This may imply that other variants are relevant used for limited exposure, but with a primary focus on native-speaker varieties for acquisition purposes.

The questions related to language and culture focus, however, primarily explore the extent to which traces of the intercultural-speaker model can be identified in terms of teaching these two main components of the English subject. Even though it seems clear that a majority of the respondents favor the native speaker as model of language exposure, we are still left with 30 % who indicate no ideal variety and 50 % of the respondents who indicate native-speaker independency in expected student language output. How can implications of this pattern then be identified in the teachers' preference for the teaching of language and culture?

This aspect seems to be reflected first and foremost in the consistency of the answers to questions 4 and 5. As indicated in the analysis, an overwhelming majority of the respondents state preference for the teaching of native-speaker cultures and language varieties.

Furthermore, about 50 % of the respondents indicate relevancy in focusing on cultures in the "outer circle" and 35.5 % of focusing on language varieties from the same region. Therefore, it seems clear that the concept of the intercultural speaker is only present to a certain degree. As pointed out by Byram (1997) and other scholars, the intercultural-speaker model is basically founded on the fact that English today is a lingua franca and that communication is more likely to take place between non-native speakers across cultural boundaries. Still, less than 10 % of the respondents in the present survey state that they consider language varieties and culture focus within the "expanding circle" relevant to the English subject. Consequently, it must be concluded that, the intercultural-speaker model is only partly recognized by the respondents and restricted to the "outer circle". With regard to the "outer circle" it also seems clear that there is greater acceptance of focusing on cultural aspects than language varieties.

### 5.2.3 Language Corrections and Assessment

The contention that the native speaker still seems to be the prevailing teaching model, especially when it comes to linguistic focus, is supported by the results for questions 9 and 10 which explored correction patterns and assessment. In question 9, the figures reveal that linguistic features which embody a certain degree of Norwegian identity in oral language production generally receive a high score. This means that they would likely be subject to correction. Norwegian word order, pronunciation and failure to transfer Norwegian expressions into idiomatic English represent areas that are particularly targeted. In addition, almost 75 % of the respondents hold that they would correct concord mistakes. At the other end, however, only some 20 % state they would correct inconsistent use of vocabulary in terms of language varieties. Therefore, the argument that most respondents are open to different language varieties seems to hold up. As the analysis of the results has shown, however, it seems probable that the range of accepted varieties is restricted to traditional standardized varieties within the native-speaker realm.

Features of language-correction views might have been explored more accurately though. In hindsight, there were only two of the alternatives provided which did not entail typically Norwegian identity features while four of them did. This may have prompted respondents to check more alternatives from the latter group than would have been the case if the nature of alternatives had been more balanced. Therefore the scores must be interpreted with caution.

Several of the respondents, however, indicate that the degree to which they would correct any of the language features suggested depends on the students' competence level. Since approximately 50 % state that students should strive for native-speaker independency in their acquisition of oral skills (cf. question 2), it is questionable whether this figure may be associated with student proficiency level or a deliberate acknowledgement of the intercultural-speaker model. As the analysis has shown, there are limited traces of the intercultural-speaker model to be found in the respondent's views on teaching practice. When it comes to assessment, the native speaker also seems to be recurring. This may therefore strengthen the former assumption that correction habits are more linked to the students' competence level. The results reveal that over 80 % of the respondents agree that native-speaker pronunciation and/or intonation will influence grading to a larger or lesser extent. This represents a paradox considering the large number of teachers who embrace the intercultural-speaker model when it comes to student language output. Based on the survey results, it thus remains somewhat unclear how a fairly significant number of responses supporting native-speaker independency in student language production relates to the preferred model of assessment, which seems to be that of the native speaker.



## 6. Summary and Conclusion

In this thesis I have pointed to the fact that *LK-06* shows a significant perspective change with regard to the subject content of English. With an extended focus on the entire English-speaking world, intercultural learning and the aim of intercultural competence have become central objectives in the subject. This change of perspective, which is part of a gradual reorientation in EFL teaching internationally, has caused scholars to question the legitimacy of the native-speaker model. Instead, the model of the intercultural speaker has been proposed as an implication of the concept of intercultural competence. I have argued that this intercultural-speaker model speaks against the teaching tradition in Norway. Considering the fact that *LK-06* has been effective for five years, I have therefore conducted the present survey to explore the extent to which the model of the intercultural speaker squares with the views of teachers of English in Norway.

It seems unrealistic to suggest that this survey gives an accurate picture of the state of opinions among teachers. The sample of respondents only represents a tiny fraction of the teaching population, and survey questionnaires are not precision instruments. Based on tendencies, however, I believe the following may be modestly concluded:

1. There is a certain connection between age and the degree to which the notion of the intercultural-speaker model is recognized. Even though the sample of respondents is not even between age groups, there still seems to be a steady trend that younger teachers are somewhat receptive to the intercultural-speaker model, but this receptiveness declines with older age.
2. The intercultural-speaker model is acknowledged first and foremost when it comes to culture focus in the English subject. The native-speaker is preferred as the teaching model for linguistic acquisition, and grading is influenced by the students' ability to acquire native-like pronunciation and intonation.
3. The intercultural-speaker model does not extend beyond the "outer circle". This indicates that cultures and language varieties within the "expanded circle" are not considered as part of the English-speaking world which the national curriculum refers to.

What this thesis is not able to clarify is how views regarding the intercultural-speaker model are distributed among teachers according to their background. For this purpose, the sample of respondents in the present survey is not representative enough. Further research could therefore be conducted on this subject matter based on factors such as school level, educational background and age.

What seems more urgent, however, is further research into speaker models on the basis of local oral assessment criteria in different Norwegian school districts. The preparatory studies I did for the present thesis indicate that the issue of speaker models is treated quite coincidentally from one district to another. This may suggest that there is little theoretical understanding of the speaker-model debate in relation to intercultural competence in Norway. In my opinion, this is unfortunate as it may result in students being assessed differently. Therefore, further research in this field should be encouraged so that teachers, curriculum planners and other school officials may establish common ground to secure an equal treatment of the students.

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## Appendix

### Spørreskjema i forbindelse med masterundersøkelse

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1. På hvilket skolenivå jobber du som lærer (eks. ungdomsskole)? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Hva er din alder? (Sett kryss)
  - a) 20-29
  - b) 30-39
  - c) 40-49
  - d) 50-59
  - e) 60-70
3. Hva slags utdanning har du i engelsk?
  - a) Halvårsstudium
  - b) Årsstudium/grunnfag
  - c) Påbygging / mellomfag
  - d) Hovedfag /master
  - e) Ingen formell utdanning
4. Hva er ditt referansepunkt for ideell engelsk når du skal oppøve elevenes muntlige språkferdigheter? (sett kryss for det du mener er mest riktig)
  - a) Britisk engelsk
  - b) Amerikansk
  - c) Annen native speaker
  - d) Har ingen ideell så lenge uttalen er klar og tydelig
  - e) Vet ikke
5. Hva mener du elevene bør etterstrebe når de skal oppøve muntlige språkferdigheter i skolefaget engelsk? (Sett kryss for det du mener, er mest riktig.)
  - a) Sette seg som mål å ta et bevisst valg i forhold til en "native speaker" variant de ønsker å modellere, og forsøke å være konsekvent i bruken av denne.
  - b) Sette seg som mål å kunne kommunisere uavhengig av en "native speaker" som referansepunkt.
  - c) Vet ikke
6. Hvilke språkvarianter mener du det er relevant å fokusere på i engelskundervisningen? (Sett opptil flere kryss.)
  - a) "Native-speaker" varianter
  - b) Varianter av engelsk som tales i land hvor det har status som offisielt språk (f.eks. Sør-Afrika, India osv.)

c) Varianter av engelsk som fremmedspråk (f.eks. Tyskland, Kina, Norge osv.)

**7. Hva mener du er relevante fokusområder i forhold til kulturstudier i engelskundervisningen?  
(Sett opptil flere kryss)**

- a) Fokus på kulturer som har engelsk som morsmåsspråk
- b) Fokus på kulturer som har engelsk som andrespråk
- c) Fokus på kulturer som har engelsk som fremmedspråk

**8. Hvordan mener du at elevene best kan bli gode kommunikatorer i engelsk internasjonalt?  
(Sett kryss for alternativet du mener er mest riktig)**

- a) Ved å ha tilegnet seg best mulig språkferdigheter i forhold til en "native speaker".
- b) Ved å ha tilegnet seg kunnskaper om ulike kulturer og kan gjøre seg forstått med norsk aksent og uttalemønster.
- c) Ved å ha tilegnet seg kunnskaper om ulike kulturer, men med språkferdigheter oppøvd etter en "native speaker" variant som modell
- e) Vet ikke

**9. Sett kryss for hvilke trekk du generelt sett ville korrigere hos en norsk elev i muntlig språkføring på engelsk:**

- a) Norsk intonasjonsmønster
- b) Norsk uttale av lyder på engelsk som ikke eksisterer på norsk (eks. "this" /dis/, "sun" /sun/, "three" /tri:)/ norsk rulle-"r" osv.)
- c) Norske idiomatiske uttrykk overført til engelsk (eks. "to take the spoon in a different hand")
- d) Norsk ordstilling ("Yesterday came I home late")
- e) Bruk av preposisjonsuttrykk modellert etter norsk (eks. "to be angry on someone)
- d) Samsvarsfeil (eks. "they feels good")
- e) Inkonsekvent bruk av vokabular (eks. "autumn"/"fall", "queue"/"line", "inhabitant"/"habitant" osv.)

**10. I hvilken grad er du enig i at god britisk, amerikansk eller annen "native speaker" uttale og/eller intonasjon har innvirkning på karakterfastsettelsen?**

Helt enig – delvis enig – delvis uenig – helt uenig